Urging Indian Diaspora to help the country

260. SHRIMATI N.R DURGA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the action taken to urge the Indian Diaspore to help the country in getting key technology from abroad and in marketing Indian defence products and technology abroad; and

(b) the response/assurance received in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) The Government has been constantly endeavouring to urge the Indian diaspora to play a role in getting technology from abroad. Similarly efforts have been begun to give a role to the diaspora in marketing Indian defence products and technology abroad.

Through the Transfer of Knowhow Through Expatriate Nationals' (TOKTEN) programme, Scientists & Technologists of Indian Origin (STIOs) have been urged to visit India and render help to Indian Science & Technology programmes. Distinguished Scientists & Technologists of Indian origin have been also invited to India through bilateral programmes of cooperation in Science & Technology with the country concerned. An Expert Group on the role of NRIs and PIOs in Science & Technology was constituted by the Department of Science & Technology at the request of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora to review the contribution of the diaspora to Indian Science & Technology programmes, to study the mechanism that the diaspora can avail of and to recommend new avenues and institutions of framework to network STIOs abroad for accelerating the pace of India's programmes in science & technology. Based on one of the recommendations of the Expert Group, a web enabled registration of Scientists & technologists of Indian origin is to be launched. Further as part of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) celebrations from 9-11 January, 2003, an interactive session was held on 'Science & Technology - Networking for Excellence' which was attended by a significant number of STIOs from abroad. The session generated enthusiasm among the participants to actively involve in India's science & technology programme.

Action to urge diaspora to involve themselves in marketing Indian defence products and technology abroad-was part of another session at

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) held on 11th January, 2003 under the caption 'Opportunities in Defence and Internal Security research & Development' which *inter alia* deliberated upon India as a source of defence components and as a base for development for defence industry.

(b) The response/assurance received from the diaspora has been encouraging in this regard. TOKTEN enabled 650 Scientists & Technologists of Indian origin to visit Indian Institutions during 1980-2001 and rendered benefits to Indian Science & Technology programme. NRIs-PIOs have set up R&D institutions in Delhi, Mumbai, Khadakpur, Kanpur and Bangalore.

The session on 'Opportunities in Defence and Internal Security Research & Development' is linked to a special website inaugurated during the PBD. The deliberations at the session resulted in a number of positive suggestions in respective areas between India and its diaspora.

Permanent venue for SAARC

261. SHRI R.R GOENKA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Sri Lanka has proposed that Kathmandu be made a permanent venue for SAARC Summits;

(b) whether this proposal has Government's acceptance;

(c) whether mere holding of summit meetings would make all countries comply with the agreements arrived at; and

(d) whether Government would like to place greater emphasis on bilateral arrangements?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) No.

(b) The question does not arise.

(c) No. While all SAARC decisions are based on unanimity there is no provision to enforce'compliance.

(d) Bilateral and regional arrangements for co-operation are complimentary to each other, and Government of India would pursue either or both in the national interest.